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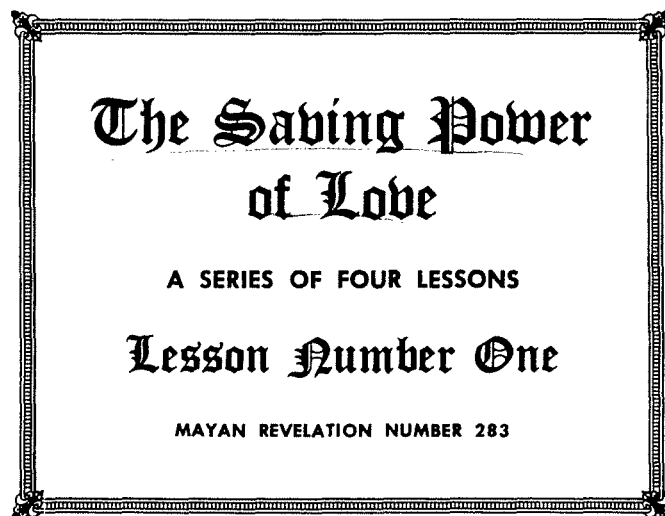
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Learning To Accept God's Love

God is Reaching Out to You

Use the Key Called Humility

No Need to Hide

Be Strengthened by God's Love

Affirmation



Beloved Perfection:

We all have a deep longing for love. We yearn for the abundant satisfactions that love alone can bring. Abundant life is possible only when we know how to accept both human and Divine Love and to gladly give the affection and emotional support that brings warmth, good cheer and security to those about us.

A home in which out-going love is lacking becomes a miniature battleground. Tensions mount. Nerves become taut. Peace and happiness vanish.

Business concerns are worn by friction when the directors think only of

profits, or the workmen think only of personal gains. Illness among employees is more prevalent when these attitudes prevail than when mutual concern is shown. A person can do his best work when those with whom he associates surround him with understanding love.

"Love or Perish" is the title of a book by the well-known psychiatrist and counselor, Dr. Smiley Blanton. Love or perish: this is the choice we all must make. Without love our days become empty, frustrations make us easy victims of disease, and we go through the motions of living without experiencing the satisfactions God intends for us to have.

We know that sometimes we have been hurt by what men call "love". We have been hampered, or weakened, instead of strengthened. So it is evident that there are two kinds of love and we need to learn to distinguish between them. There is a vast difference between the love that saps our vitality and the love that increases our power to cope with the challenges we face. Agape' love - that is, the love which, in its nature, is very like the love God has for man - can revitalize a person who is weak, or bored, or discouraged.

Out-going love can answer your deepest longings. It can heal your heart-aches. It can enable you to have a rich and abundant life.

In the coming weeks there will be instruction in how to generously give love, how to combat evil with love, and how to find peace and power through love. But before we seek to grasp the principles that enable us to tap the potential to be found in human love, we will do well to endeavor to understand how we can fully accept the Divine Love which our Heavenly Father offers to each one of us. When our minds and hearts are filled with impulses from the Source of all goodness, there is no room in our lives for apathy, or hate, or despair.

Join me in the prayer:

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank Thee for the assurance that I am never beyond the bounds of Thy care. Help me to turn to Thee more frequently, to trust Thee more completely and to accept the boundless love Thou waits to bestow upon each child of Thine. As I study this Lesson, make me receptive to Thy Truth and conscious of Thy Presence. In Jesus' name, Amen.



GOD IS REACHING OUT TO YOU

In the familiar parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus pictured God as a father who kept looking for the boy who had willfully chosen to go from home and, seeking after pleasure, had wasted both his talents and his inheritance. We might better call this story "The Parable of the Forgiving Father." It was told to reveal to men the nature of God. It portrays the Heavenly Father as One who is eagerly awaiting our return to His presence.

This is the "Good News" of the Gospels. Men had previously thought of God as One who would give aid when they entreated Him, or when they brought sacrifices to the altar. But to think of God seeking us, running to meet us when we turn to Him, is quite a different concept. The idea is so stupendous that only a few of the followers of the Master have grasped its full significance.

Often we are like the younger son in the parable. We are restless. We long for the privilege of going our own way. We like to be independent and we do not want to account to anyone for either our behavior or our expenditures. We prefer to spend our time and our money just as we please.

God grants us a large measure of freedom. He does not force us to remain in His presence, or to serve Him. But when we wander into some "far country", when we squander the resources God has given us, He does not disown us. He still loves us. When we turn toward "Home" - toward the way of life for which we were made - we find that God is waiting for us with outstretched arms.

This is figurative language. Let us see how it applies to a few everyday experiences:

Mr. X. forgot that he had a divine inheritance, and he wasted his body by self-indulgence. He lost his business. He was divorced by his wife and despised by his children. He was tempted to do away with himself when a friend took him to a farm run by an organization called "Christian Enterprise". There someone told him that although he had sunk to the depths, he was not beyond the reach of God's redeeming Love. Despair gave way to hope. In sheltered surroundings he regained his ability to work. Through worship with others who had found their way back from the gutters of life, Mr. X. gradually came to feel that he did not need to make a new start by his own strength alone, for as he turned to God for support, he was undergirded by Divine Power.

Consider the case of the physicist who had devoted several years to perfecting means of destruction and then had come to the place where he knew he could not go on. His reason told him that his labors might be used to help protect his nation, but he was sick at heart, feeling his time and skill were being wasted. He contemplated suicide. He did not see any use in living. Then - as a last resort - he prayed for guidance. His wife prayed with him. For the first time since his childhood he felt that God was leading him. He secured a new position. It paid less salary, but it paid great dividends in personal satisfaction. He told a friend, "God had been tugging at my sleeve for years. When I responded I found joys which are of priceless value."

Look at the experience of a woman who had her own car, a beautiful home and leisure time, but still she was bored with life. She was fed up with clubs, and bridge and television programs. There was a continued sense of emptiness in her days. Every hour when she was in society she felt estranged from the group and afterwards, when she was alone, she felt horribly frustrated. Life held no purpose for her. Then she heard of the need for someone who would bring encouragement to handicapped men and women. She offered her services and spent one day a week at a hospital clinic, playing games with unfortunate victims of cerebral palsy and other crippling diseases. Through the loving service she rendered, God became real to her. Then she found satisfaction not only in the time she devoted to social service, but with the time she spent with her family and friends.

Finally, consider the struggle of a college student who was going through

the motions of studying, but seldom concentrating on his lessons. He preferred to be having a good time with the gang. As the Prodigal Son in the parable, he craved freedom to do just what he wished; but he found he was becoming bound by chains of self-interest and doubt. Then he was stricken with influenza. Physical exhaustion contributed to his mental confusion and he was ready to quit school, but in his darkest hour he received a letter from his mother saying that she was praying for him. During his college years he had often heard these words and tossed them aside. But on this occasion, perhaps because the young man's need was so acute, he listened. He feebly mumbled, "O God, help me!" Later he told a friend, "At that moment I knew the Heavenly Father was standing beside me - that He had been seeking me all along, only I was blind to His presence."

Perhaps, Beloved Perfector, you, too, have wandered far from the Father's presence. Perhaps you are trying to be free - to escape the duties and restrictions that come with living as a son, or daughter, of God. If so, be assured that whenever you turn toward your Heavenly Father you will find that He is reaching out to you.

But you may be one of the fortunate people who, by daily prayer and meditation, keep very close to God. If so, you have the privilege and responsibility of helping those who are floundering to find the way that leads to "Home".

Never speak in a crude, obtrusive way, or, by self-righteousness, give offense; but endeavor to establish rapport with your associates - both young and old - and whenever you see the need, give assurance that our God is One whose love is so great that He seeks us even when we fail to seek Him.

The love of our Father is measureless. His concern for His children knows no limits. Every time we turn to Him we find we are welcomed by the outstretched Arms.



NO NEED TO HIDE

Each one of us has some cause for regrets. Failures - either in the things we have done, or in the things we have left undone - disturb our minds. We pretend that circumstances beyond our control are the cause of our errors or shortcomings. But we are so made that even while we are voicing excuses for our conduct we are condemning ourselves, and a sense of guilt lingers to torture us.

Peace comes as we learn to accept our limitations as well as our possibilities for greater usefulness. The first step is to admit our failures and to ask God for forgiveness. Blaming ourselves when we have failed in some attempt, or have indulged in some dissipation, is useless indeed. It is far better to remember that "to err is human" and we can become clean again as we admit our wrong-doing and ask God to wipe out the blot on our lives. There is no need to hide from our Father. He is waiting to forgive us and to show us the way to live as His children.

It is quite impossible, though, to accept His forgiveness if we continue in the practices that we know are unworthy of any child of God. We may make occasional slips, but we ought to set our standards high. An impatient word, an unkind

thought, or a careless deed may creep into our behavior, but we will immediately be filled with remorse. Then we should apologize, if possible, to the one whom we have offended and turn eagerly to God, never attempting to conceal our mis-doings either from Him, or from ourselves.

Hold fast to the thought that He who made you understands your temptations and weaknesses. Whenever you are truly penitent, He is patient with you. So ask God's forgiveness for your errors and gladly accept it. Do not pray to have your burden of guilt lifted and still hug it close.

Self-accusation and self-condemnation are fruitless. Honest remorse, coupled with a willingness to strip off all pretense, paves the way for the soul's climb to the presence of God. Fortunately you do not need to prove that you are worthy of God's love. It is the nature of our Father to forgive you whenever you are truly sorry for your mistakes.

So why continue to carry your load of guilt? Why bury it deep in the subconscious where it can stir up trouble? Lay it before God. Do not try to hide from the Almighty. Humbly accept His forgiveness and His love and your life will be filled with delight and inner peace.

The great Augustine was right when he said: "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."



USE THE KEY CALLED HUMILITY

False pride often is the barrier that keeps us from the presence of God. We attempt to do alone those things that can only be accomplished with Divine help. We pretend that we can manufacture Heaven out of material things. We try to prove that we are supermen, when what we need to discover is the power we can possess when we surrender our littleness to God's greatness.

True humility does not call for self-depreciation, but for the ability to see ourselves in relation to our Creator. We need to raise our eyes and, with the Psalmist, cry out:

"My heart is fixed, O God;

I will sing, yea, I will sing praises ...

I will give thanks unto thee ...

For thy lovingkindness is great above the heavens;

And thy truth reacheth to the skies." (from Psalm 108)

When we kneel in worship, we rise to stand more erect. When we extol our Creator, we are ennobled.

The Hebrew faith and the Christian religion are founded upon the belief that God is not only Almighty, but that He has a personal interest in His children. We

are filled with amazement as we try to visualize a God who has a concern for each of us. Surely this cannot depend upon our merits, but upon God's infinite grace!

We express this belief as we sing:

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.
.....
For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

Know that God loves you not because you are good, or strong, or noble, but because He sees in you a child who can attain goodness and nobility. Stand in awe of God and you never can be proud. Measure your life by the standards of perfection seen in Jesus and you will not be prompted to boast.

The best way to be truly humble, and yet gain in self-confidence and strength, is to become keenly aware that you are supported by One who loves you in spite of your weaknesses and shortcomings; One who will patiently lead you into a life worthy of immortality.

Daily ask for God's help. Seek His presence often. Knock upon the door that opens into eternal life.

Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."
(Matthew 5:5).

The word "meek" has lost the positive quality it once held. The original meaning, stemming from the Greek, indicated the willingness of two oxen to be yoked together to pull a load. Christ used the word "meek" to characterize the men who agree to work with God to bring in His Kingdom.

Think of a few people who had this kind of meekness.

Paul was willing to accept new truth even when it meant that he must leave behind the traditions and the security of which he was so proud. He was obedient to the call to serve God by preaching on Mars Hill, or by praying and singing in a dungeon. Paul was "meek" in the true sense of the word.

A Swedish boy named Carl Linnaeus was "meek" as he studied the plants in his father's garden, discovering facts about them which were not written in any

book. When at twenty-one years of age he went to Uppsala University, he found he had to make great sacrifices if he was to get an education. He ate only one meal a day and patched his worn-out shoes with pasteboard. He studied all the botany textbooks of the eighteenth century, and became deeply troubled not only by the blanks, but by the many errors. Linnaeus sought to establish an accurate system of classifying plants. He did not jump to conclusions, but patiently sought new insight and painstakingly analyzed his findings. His was the spirit that led to the remarkable advances in science during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The research worker knows that because he has tried a dozen experiments and they have all been failures, that does not mean there is no possible solution to the problem. God's truths are revealed to the seeker who, with infinite patience, explores the wonders of our physical universe.

The answer to social problems often awaits the attention and sustained loyalty of men and women who are meek. Unfair practices will not be tolerated by those who believe they are co-workers with their Creator.

Personal problems, too, are surmounted by a spirit of meekness, a willingness to ask for Divine Help and to accept it. Sometimes this requires us to give up the foolish pride that is tempting us to try to attain impossible goals. Sometimes it demands that we forget the jealousy that is warping our perspective. Sometimes it inspires us to give up the impatience that is sapping our strength.

Take a fresh look at yourself in the light of God's love. See the person you can become if you will link your efforts with The Divine. Let God's strength supplement your weakness. Let His wisdom lead you on the upward way. Let His Love dispel any sense of inferiority or self-hate.



BE STRENGTHENED BY GOD'S LOVE

When you are sustained by the love of God you can walk with courage even when you face the reverses that life so often brings. You can win spiritual victories even when buffeted by the storms of disappointment, illness, and sorrow.

But before you can claim the power that God is waiting to give to you, all self-centeredness must go. All envy, or anger, or impatience must be wiped out of your mind.

You cannot command yourself to be peaceful, but as you accept the love of God you will know serenity. You cannot stop worrying just by wishing to do so; but as your trust in God increases, your anxieties will melt away. You cannot dispel your weakness just by forcing yourself to attempt bigger responsibilities, but as you "yoke-up" with Eternal Love you will feel that a force greater than your own is giving you the strength you need for each day's tasks.

An awareness of the sustaining power of God's Love may come to you as you worship, so do not fail to join those who gather to praise the Almighty and to pray for His guidance and power. Faith will come to you as you participate in family prayers, or in Bible study, and through private prayer, study, and meditation.

Keep ever in your mind the truth that the more nearly you let your daily work and behavior be in accord with your praying, the more real will be the presence of God in your life. Live as you pray. Then your requests for insight and strength will be answered. When you fail you will not despair, but will pray more earnestly, and God will lift you up and steady you as you make a fresh start.

With the Psalmist, give thanks unto the Lord, saying:

"He set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

He put a new song in my mouth,

a song of praise to our God. ...

As for me, I am poor and needy;

but the Lord takes thought for me.

Thou art my help and my deliverer." (Psalm 40: 2,3,17)

By faith you will conquer your doubts and anxieties. When you are undergirded by God's generous and steadfast love you will be able to cope with whatever challenges you. Joy will stream into your life when you accept God's support and let His spirit shine in you and through you.

REMEMBER: The Heavenly Father is waiting with outstretched Arms - waiting to welcome you Home. If you feel lost, you can find security in Him. If you feel guilty, you can find forgiveness in Him. If you feel weak, you can find power through Him.

God has respect for your personality. He will not force His way into your life. He is gracious and courteous. He is patient; so if you do not turn to Him today, He will still be waiting for you tomorrow.

But why continue to struggle alone? If you have been vainly trying to succeed by your own efforts, turn to God now and accept the guidance and power He is waiting to give to you. If you are tortured by guilt, pray for forgiveness and know that you will receive it. If you are lonely, take time for fellowship with your Lord and you will receive the warmth and comfort you desire.

Don't be content to have only a vague sense of God's part in creation, or only a casual acquaintance with Him.

Daily seek His presence. Set aside a definite time and place for meditation and prayer. Open your mind and heart to the Divine. Accept the healing and sustaining love that God alone can give.

In all you do depend upon the leading of the Divine, and you will go forward with confidence. Open your life daily, even hourly to the presence of God, and tensions will disappear. Think of yourself as God's child, accept His immeasurable Love, and your life can be transformed. You will be peaceful and radiant even when confronted with disappointment, pain, or adversity. Under all circumstances you

will walk triumphantly as you are sustained by the power of God's Love.



AFFIRMATION

I will avoid the temptation of self-pride, or self-pity. Each day I will turn to God and accept the love and support He is waiting to bestow upon me.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR.